

Language Learning Strategies — draft ^{THE 01/}

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From Oxford, Stevick, Rubin and Thomson, Brown, Uhl Chamot and O'Malley

A. Remembering more effectively:

1. Overview and link with material already known.
 - a. Cognates
 - b. What you know about the linguistic system
 - c. Related words
2. Group things
 - a. by
 - b. by grammatical class
 - c. by semantic class
 - d. opposites
3. Associate
 - a. with the physical world
 - b. with context (sentence or bigger)
 - c. with function
 - d. with sounds
 1. rhyming
 2. alliteration
 3. with music
 4. say words aloud as you study them
 - e. with visual images
 1. mental imagery
 2. photos & drawings, icons
 3. vocabulary cards or lists
 4. with color
 - f. with actions
 1. Physical response
 2. Write things out
 3. Say them out loud
 4. Manipulate study cards
4. Review in a structured way

B. Using all your Mental Processes:

1. Observe: use your eyes and ears
 - a. Listen to native speakers of the FL when they speak your language and notice their mistakes.
 - b. Look for feedback from native speakers when you speak.
 - c. Listen carefully and repeat after teacher or native speaker on tape or in real life.
 - d. Pay attention -- concentrate on what is happening, both details and the big picture.
 - e. Pay attention to what you yourself are doing -- monitor.
1. Analyze:
 - a. the linguistic system -- try to find patterns and state your own rules.
 - b. the culture
 - c. your errors
 - d. your own emotions and reactions

2. Investigate:
 - a. How language learning works
 - b. the culture
 - c. how much error is tolerated in the language
 - d. related languages -- their principle features
 - e. this language -- its principle features
3. Practice:
 - a. the sounds and alphabet
 - b. grammatical patterns you have studied or discovered
 - d. anything you want to become automatic
 - e. in structured conversation
 - f. by conversing with someone in your own imagination
4. Experiment: (test your hypotheses)
 - a. with recombining items in new ways. (recurring parts)
 - b. with new ways of using words
 - c. with grammar rules -- stretch them to their limits
5. Adjust understanding according to new information.

C. Getting Actively Involved

1. Make the language your own:
 - a. make your own tools
 - b. make your own games
 - c. Use your creativity:
 1. write poems, plays, jokes
 2. create captions for cartoons or photos
 3. write songs
2. Make your own opportunities
 - a. create communicative urgency, by putting yourself in situations where you will have to communicate.
 - b. initiate conversations -- ask questions
 - c. find a way to use what you've understood as soon as possible.
 - e. read regularly in the language -- things you are INTERESTED in.
 - f. listen to the language regularly-- songs, radio, people
 - g. watch films and TV in the language -- things you LIKE
 - h. write regularly in the language -- journal, letters, essays, poems
3. Be active, even when silent
 - a. Listen to other people and pay attention to their pronunciation.
 - b. Try to finish other people's sentences in your head.
 - c. Rehearse silently before speaking.

D. Interact with Other People

1. Ask questions
2. Find people who are good communicators, who can adjust their speech to your level and will make an effort to help you to understand.
3. Ask for help from native speakers or skilled speakers
4. Make friends with speakers of the language.
5. Interact with fellow learners and native speakers
6. Find people whom you enjoy and who seem to like you.
7. Sit around and watch and listen to other people who speak the

- language.
- 8. Find out the Conversational Rules and Use Them
 - a. Learn some phrases for beginning and ending conversations.
 - b. Learn some expressions that show you are paying attention and following the conversation.
 - c. Learn to express your reaction.
 - d. Learn to involve your conversational partner.
 - e. Learn ways of managing a conversation.
- 9. Learn some routines for accepting and refusing invitations.
- 10. Learn to ask for help.
- 11. Learn to offer help.

E. Organize

- 1. Information about the language
 - a. pronunciation
 - b. grammar -- arrange in ways that make sense to YOU.
 - c. vocabulary -- group according to some principle.
- 2. Your Program of study.
 - a. make a schedule
 - b. Set goals and objectives
 - c. Choose a methods, approach, techniques.
 - d. Identify the purpose of the language task.
 - e. Evaluate yourself periodically

F. Manage your Emotions

- 1. Be aware of your emotions
 - a. Recognize stress
 - b. Use a language-learning diary to record what makes you feel really good and really bad.
- 2. Make the most of positive emotions.
 - a. find people whom you enjoy
 - b. think about what you like about the people and the language.
 - c. take part in activities where you can have fun using the language.
 - e. learn to want to say what you can say.
- 3. Find ways to reduce negative emotions
 - a. Use exercise, music or relaxation to relieve stress
 - b. Take risks wisely -- avoid situations where you make so many mistakes or get so much negative feedback that you are discouraged.
 - c. Visualize yourself speaking the language fluently and interacting with people. Then when you are in such a situation, you will have been there before.
- 4. Overcome negative emotions
 - a. Don't let errors interfere with your participation
 - b. remind yourself of your motivation
 - c. remind yourself of your spiritual resources.
 - d. remind yourself of the progress you have made

G. Use All Clues to Understand what you Hear or Read.

1. Look for the Big Picture: the main topic, mood or setting.
 - a. Scan a whole newspaper
 - b. Try to let the details wash over you, while you get the main idea of a conversation or broadcast.
2. Look for the important parts.
3. Use probabilities.
4. Assume that the here and now is relevant
5. Use conversational context
6. Use phrase or sentence context
7. Use social context
8. Use your general knowledge

H. Find ways to get the message across in speaking or writing, despite limited knowledge:

- a. Use gestures
- b. Use a synonym
- c. Use a description.
- d. Use cognates
- e. Paraphrase
- f. Ask for help
- g. Use hesitation fillers
- h. Use some lines learned as wholes
- i. Repeat

Speech-Led Versus Comprehension-Led Language Learning

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From the very beginning... the learner should talk, talk, talk... (Healey)

...it has been found that a 'silent period' at the beginning of the learning process, during which the learner simply listens to the new language and is not made to produce it, greatly enhances the speed and quality of learning (Dulay, Burt and Krashen).

What is the language learner to do in the face of conflicting advice like this? There are numerous guides to language learning, offering many forms of advice and frequently contradicting each other. What is worse, the terminology used is often that of the psychologist or classroom teacher and not that of the field linguist. In this paper I will attempt to give a brief overview of some issues in language learning and to do so, I will adopt my own terminology. Language learning will be referred to as being either *Speech-led* or *Comprehension-led*, depending on which activity the learner concentrates. These terms do roughly overlap with more usual descriptions of language learning, but I will continue to use them because of their immediate relevance to the task of field language learning.

Speech-led

One of the best known speech-led schemes of language learning is the 'LAMP method', taken from the book *Language Acquisition Made Practical (LAMP)* by Brewster and Brewster. This method of language learning revolves around the daily learning cycle of

preparing and practicing a text, saying the text to as many as fifty people in the community and then evaluating the day's progress.

By the end of the second day of language learning, the learner could express something like this:

Hello, how are you?

I want to learn your language.

This is my second day here.

This is all I can say so far.

I'll be seeing you.

Good-bye. (LAMP p. 8)

Each day the learner elicits a text and memorizes it, drilling any difficult aspects of pronunciation and grammar, but the major focus of each day's activity is the communication phase, where the learner goes for a walk, repeating her text to as many people as possible. *The learner gets a little but uses it a lot.* It is this repetition of material which is seen as the key to mastery of the language. Sufficient repetition (50-100 times) of a memorized text will bring the learner to the point where she can use the material spontaneously and recognize it when it is addressed to her. Although some comprehension activities are built into each cycle, it is the learner's production of language which is seen as paramount, not comprehension.

Of course, you will probably not understand most of what they say to you. But don't get paranoid. (LAMP p. 26)

LAMP insists that all text material and drills should be culturally relevant, interesting and appropriate to the stage that the learner has reached and provides many useful ideas for language learning. The inventiveness of LAMP coupled with the rigor of the daily learning cycle are certainly a great help to the language learner and this method has been used successfully both within SIL and elsewhere (Brewster and Brewster 1981).

Other descriptions of speech-led methods of language learning can be found in books by Larson and Smalley, and by Healey, as well as in various SIL language learning handbooks (cf. Burgess and Andersson).

Comprehension Driven

Comprehension driven language learning is a more recent idea than the speech-led model. There are no guide books along the lines of LAMP to aid the learner, although there are some publications which suggest methods to follow (Kindell, Thomson, and others). Rather than memorize and repeat texts to build up a command of the language, the learner seeks, first, to understand language directed towards her. The learner uses various techniques to ensure a flow of language input at an appropriate level. Just as the speech-led model assumes that repeatedly using a phrase will allow the learner to understand it on hearing it, the comprehension-led model assumes that if the learner fully understands a piece of language, she will eventually internalize it as a part of the bank from which she will draw her own language production. To use Dwight Gradin's phrase, *language must be got in, before it can come out*.

Theoretical Basis

Although the terms speech-led and comprehension-led language learning are essentially practical, referring to what the learner does, there is a theoretical basis underlying each model which I would briefly like to examine.

The theory lying behind speech-led language learning is essentially behaviorist. Language is seen as a series of habits formed in response to stimuli. Behaviorist psychologists saw first language (L1) learning as being speech-led—children mastering their mother tongue by imitating utterances produced by adults and having their speech either rewarded or corrected. In this way children were thought to build up a knowledge of the patterns that comprise the language they are learning. For example, a child hearing the word *drink* repeats it without understanding what it means and is immediately offered a glass of water. This scenario is repeated over time, the child saying *drink* and the adult proffering water and gradually the child comes to associate the utterance with the offer of a drink. However, if the child says *ink* there is no parental reaction and the child soon drops *ink* from her verbal repertoire. In the one case a habit is built up through reinforcement while in the second case the word is not reinforced and falls out of use.

The speech-led model sees second language learning in the same way: repetition and reinforcement of utterances allowing the learner to form new language habits. The new language needs to be broken down into manageable pieces which by repeated drilling and practice become automatic to the learner.

Language learning involves acquiring a set of automatic habits that will enable us to communicate successfully... Each feature must be thoroughly mastered before any real victory is possible (Healey, p. 285).

The more modern behaviorist language learning guides such as LAMP and Healey do see a need for the learner to understand the meaning of the material she learns. Nonetheless, it is the repetition of that material which is seen as the most important factor. This is clearly illustrated by the daily learning cycle in LAMP, with various forms of drills in the practice phase and then the 30-50 repetitions of a text in the communication phase.

Two important factors in speech-led language learning are the attitude to learner's errors and the effect of the learner's mother tongue.

Errors are viewed as a serious problem in this model of language learning. The problem is seen to be that if the learner produces speech containing errors and the errors are not corrected, then these errors will, in effect, be reinforced and become habits, and so form part of the learner's ongoing speech. Thus from the very outset the learner is encouraged to drill and practice so as to produce perfectly formed utterances.

The major source of error is thought to be the learner's own mother tongue. Linguistic habits learned in childhood, then practiced and reinforced over many years, are seen as a block to acquiring the new habits required for learning a second language.

The grammatical apparatus programmed into the mind as the first language interferes with the smooth acquisition of the second (Ellis, p. 22).

So in many ways second language acquisition is seen as a process of overcoming the habits formed in learning a first language and replacing them with a new set of habits.

The process of second language acquisition is often characterised in popular opinion as that of overcoming the effects of L1, of slowly replacing the features of the L1 that intrude into the L2 with those of the target language and so of approximating ever closer to native-speaker speech (Corder, 1981).

The mother tongue is not solely seen as the villain of the piece. While there are areas in which mother tongue habits hinder the learner, it is equally possible that a feature from the L1 may be present in the L2 providing the learner with ready learned features.

For instance an L1 English speaker would find the French phrase *j'ai trente ans* (I have thirty years) difficult and may well end up making an error, because it does not fit his established English habits, whereas the corresponding German phrase *Ich bin dreissig Jahre alt* (I am thirty years old) shows the same construction as the English and should be easily learned. Some authors refer to negative and positive transfer when errors are produced, or avoided because of carry-over from L1.

If the mother tongue is the major source of second language learner errors, then it ought to be possible to predict the areas where learners would have difficulty by a careful comparison of the two languages, a process referred to as Contrastive Analysis.

Learning difficulties arise at the points where the structure of your own language differs from that of the new language—the target language. There is said to be mismatch between the mother tongue and the target language at these points. You need to recognise what the mismatches are between your own language and the new one. You have then located the trouble spots in your language learning and must tackle these systematically with appropriate drills (Burgess and Andersson, p. 59).

There are a number of serious problems associated with the behaviourist basis of speech-led language learning which we need to briefly examine. In first language studies it was pointed out (Chomsky, 1959) that a behaviourist model could not account for the rich, creative use of language that learners are capable of. In addition the premiss that children first learn to speak by imitating adult utterances cannot explain why early learners typically combine words in a way which they could never have heard from an adult.

Research has also shown that the idea that errors in L2 learning are due mainly to habits carried over from the L1 (contrastive analysis), though outwardly sensible and obvious, does not actually hold true in practice. Dulay and Burt found that among adult Spanish speakers learning English only 3 percent of errors could be attributed to their mother tongue. Although Ellis suggests a much higher proportion (33%) of learner errors can be attributed to the effect of their first language, this is still much less than half.

In addition to this, learners do not always seem to benefit from habits from their mother tongue which would help them learn the new language. For instance, adult Spanish speaking learners of English would often not use the English plural morpheme *s*, despite the fact that Spanish has the same feature (Dulay and Burt, p. 98).

However, although the evidence seems to be that learner's grammatical errors are not derived from their mother tongue, it does seem that many (although not all) phonological errors do reflect the learner's L1. In reality this is fairly obvious. We can generally spot a Frenchman speaking English (or an Englishman French for that matter) by his accent.

The theoretical basis for comprehension-led language learning is somewhat different from that which we have discussed so far. The learner acquires language by hearing the language spoken (input) and internally organizing the data into a system. Having processed language input, the learner will be able to produce new and unique utterances. Stephen Krashen suggests that a learner acquires 'a new grammatical structure when she understands input containing that structure.

Humans acquire language in only one way—by understanding messages or by receiving 'comprehensible input' (Krashen, 1985).

For example, a learner with no knowledge of the past tense may be able to understand input referring to past action because of the presence of previously acquired temporal phrases such as 'yesterday'. She would then unconsciously assimilate the changes in the verb phrase associated with past action, building up a knowledge of their structure and eventually producing new utterances containing the structures, herself. No one is entirely sure how the system of the new language is built up by the brain and there are a number of different

theories to explain the process (see McLaughlin). One thing that does seem to happen is that the learner adopts a process of hypothesis testing. The learner erects a hypothesis about a grammatical structure and produces utterances in accordance with it. Reaction to the utterance may then cause her to adopt a new hypothesis or accept her current hypothesis as true.

| | |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Mother | Did Billy have his egg cut up for him at breakfast? |
| Child | Yes, I showed him. |
| Mother | You what? |
| Child | I showed him. |
| Mother | You showed him? |
| Child | I seed him. |
| Mother | Ah, you saw him. |
| Child | Yes, I saw him. |

Here the child within a short exchange appears to have tested three hypotheses: one relating to the concord of subject and verb in a past tense, another about the meaning of show and see and a third about the form of the irregular past tense of see. It only remains to be pointed out that if the child had said I saw him immediately we would have no means of knowing whether he had merely repeated a model sentence or had already learned the three rules just mentioned. (Corder)

Errors, then, are no longer seen as the bugbear of the learner, but rather, as a positive thing, showing evidence of the process of hypothesis testing. The learner is not expected to produce near perfect utterances from the start, as in the speech-led model, but rather will proceed by a series of stages. The learner is said to possess an 'Interlanguage', an intermediary form which should be constantly changing as it approximates more and more to the new language. Of course, few adult learners reach native-speaker proficiency in a new language. The comprehension-led model does not regard this as being due to uncorrected errors becoming reinforced as habits. Rather the learner is thought to reach a point at which her ability in the new language is adequate for her purposes and then social and emotional (affective) factors, such as lowering of motivation, take over preventing her from making any further

progress and the learner's interlanguage becomes 'fossilized' at an intermediate point.

Practical Applications

Of course most language learners are more interested in methodology than in theory; they want to know 'how to learn a language'—preferably by some easy, fail-safe method. The problem is that, despite all our vain hopes, there isn't an easy way to learn a language (shame), so what should the learner do?

The great advantage of a book such as LAMP is the structured program which it presents. The learner is provided with an overall scheme and lots of good, creative ideas to add variety. However, as we have seen, speech-led methods such as LAMP are based on a behaviourist model of language learning, which is not an adequate description of the learning process. By comparison, comprehension-led methods of language learning have a better theoretical basis, but no good, practical program has been made widely available. In closing I would like to examine various practical aspects of language learning and see how they might be integrated into a comprehension-led method.

Socio - Affective Factors

The term affective refers to emotions, attitudes, motivations, and values. It is impossible to overstate the importance of the affective factors influencing language learning (Oxford, p. 140).

To the learner in the field affective factors are of primary importance. The swings of mood from high to low, a feeling of failure, and the times when motivation is completely absent are regular features of life for most learners.

I believe that this is one area in which LAMP is very weak, to those of us who are introverts the insistence that we speak to thirty or more people a day is a very real cause of stress. Leaving aside the cultural difficulty of simply repeating a text and moving on rather than sitting together to exchange protracted greetings, many learners are overwhelmed by the idea of talking to so many people. Failure to learn the daily text and successfully repeat it can lead to learners

feeling guilty and becoming discouraged which can, in turn, make learning the next day's text even harder. Marjorie Foyle suggests that LAMP type methods of language learning are an important source of stress among missionaries.

The importance of affective factors in language learning has been taken up by a number of authors (see Brown). Most language learners are aware that affective factors can cause them to receive less input (staying in the office to classify data rather than mixing with people—we've all done it!) but they are less aware that these same factors also reduce their ability to process the input that they do receive. This concept is referred to as the affective filter (Dulay, et al). When the filter is high the learner is unable to process the information that she is receiving so, although she may be in a good language learning situation, she may not be able to benefit from it because of her physical or emotional state. Poor physical health, depression, fatigue, loneliness, and a host of other factors can all lead to a high filter and the learner not being able to make the best of her situation.

So, if a learner is to benefit from a comprehension-led model of language learning, attention must be paid to affective factors. It is unreasonable to expect language learning to be entirely stress free, but steps should be taken to lower the stress level as much as possible. In some ways a comprehension-led method of language learning is intrinsically less stressful than a speech-led method.

An approach which stresses the development of the receptive skills (particularly listening) before the productive skills may have much to offer the older learner (Schleppergrell).

We have already noted the difficulty faced by the speech-led learner of having to learn and repeat a daily text. These difficulties are at their greatest early on in the language learning program, when the learner is not only concerned with the language, but may also have to build a house, meet lots of new people, and work her way through culture stress. To be sure, culture stress, house building and the rest, will always be present whatever method of learning is adopted, but within a comprehension-led program the learner will not be faced with the extra burden of having to repeat a text to forty or so people each day. The learner could concentrate on building a receptive

vocabulary using total physical response and other comprehension building activities. She could also spend lengthy periods with local people, listening to the language without feeling any pressure to speak or recite a text. In fact, sitting and watching and listening is a far more culturally appropriate activity in West Africa than saying a few words and then moving on. An adult learner would certainly need to memorize a few useful sayings such as greetings, leave takings, and requests for clarifications, but these can be used sparingly and the learner should feel no compulsion to speak the language until she is ready. This period when the learner is under very little pressure to produce the language not only reduces the stress factor it also allows the learner's cognitive apparatus to process the language. Being compelled to produce language too early is seen by some authors as an important source of problems in language learning (Krashen, 1982).

One suggestion is that the learner should not initially locate in the language area but somewhere close to it, then working with an intermediary person, someone from the target language group with a knowledge of the learner's culture, the learner uses comprehension-led techniques to build up a knowledge of the language before moving into the language area itself. I can see great advantages in this sort of approach, as the learner could take the first steps in language learning while living in the relatively low-stress environment of a town or mission station before moving out to 'the village'. Once in the village, having a basic knowledge of the language would help the learner adapt more smoothly into the new culture and situation. However, this begs a lot of questions regarding the role of the translator. Would 'bonding' be possible in this situation? Is 'bonding' a useful concept in our work anyway? These questions are of crucial importance to the language learner (see Hill, 1990a).

Affective factors are important throughout the language learning period and learners need to be made aware of strategies for managing their emotions and attitudes; both Healey and Oxford have a number of useful suggestions that could be incorporated into any learner's program.

Optimizing Input

If the learner's focus is on understanding the language then a large slice of her effort needs to be devoted to obtaining a flow of language input at a level which is appropriate to her. The learner needs to be able to control the flow of input in two areas, in informal conversation with native speakers and in the formal language learning sessions with a language helper. In informal situations the learner is very often completely overwhelmed by the amount of language which she hears and as a result she is unable to benefit from the exposure she is receiving. Rebel Oxford lists various strategies which are of help to the learner in this sort of situation. By taking an active part in conversation, the more advanced learner can request clarification or repetition and slow down the flow of input. In situations where intervention is inappropriate, such as village meetings or church, the learner may focus on one particular aspect or topic of the speech. For instance, in church a new learner may simply listen out for the word 'God' and not pay any attention to the rest of the sermon.

In the more formal situation controlling the flow of input is easier, but the learner must avoid boredom, both for herself and her language helper. Imaginative games can be of great help and can be varied so as to keep both parties interested.

The new language learner requires a lot of contextual clues in order to understand and make use of input, whereas the more advanced learner is much less dependent on the context. Greg Thomson defines four stages in the learner's progress, each with appropriate activities designed to provide the correct level of input for the learner.

Text based work can ensure a good supply of appropriate language input. After some sort of communal activity (a trip to the fields, a visit to another village), the language helper can be asked to record a brief description of what happened. The learner already understands the gist of what is being said as she participated in it, and with repeated listening will develop a knowledge of the syntax and lexicon of the text. One great advantage of this sort of approach is that the language recorded will be natural, containing grammatical forms and vocabulary which would be very hard to elicit in a more traditional approach (Hill 1990). With a bit of forethought texts can be elicited

which provide valuable insights for the learner's anthropology studies and which can also be used in discourse studies later on.

Developing her comprehension skills allows the learner to benefit from any casual exposure to the language. Those following a speech-led model-practice hard-and-are-able-to-produce-well-formed questions which tend to elicit complicated answers, beyond the competence of the learner to understand. So for example, the learner may find herself able to conduct an ethnographic interview in the language, but not understand what is being said to her. Although the comprehension-led learner may not, at least initially, frame her questions as well, she is in a much better position to understand what is being said to her, as respondents will adjust their replies in the light of her linguistic short comings and by virtue of her own comprehension skills. This is of crucial importance to those who only have a limited time available for their language learning. The comprehension-led learner is much better equipped than her speech-led colleague to carry on informal language learning once a short period of formal language learning is finished.

Drilling

At first glance the comprehension-led approach seems very attractive, not least because it appears to involve less hard work than the speech-led model; none of those tedious grammar and phonology drills. However, the comprehension-led methods actually involve just as much work as the speech-led model if not more. One distinct disadvantage of the comprehension-led approach is, as we have already noted, that there is no comprehensive guide or scheme that the learner can follow. This throws the learner very much on her own resources and requires a high degree of motivation and imagination. A comprehension-led approach requires the learner to spend long periods of time in structured listening to the language. Ideally the learner should become familiar with many hours of recordings of natural texts and must spend time with speakers of the language in nonformal settings. There is a point, too, when the learner does need to start producing the language. It is no good for her to insist that she is still not ready to speak after a few months. The comprehension-led model is no sinecure, but it is true that drills are not a very important part of the approach. Repetition of structures is important, but the focus is on the communication of a

message. Now it is true that LAMP and other speech-led methods insist that drill material should be meaningful and that the learner should think about the meaning as she works through the drills, but the stress is still on repeating the structure until it becomes a habit.

Rather than straight forward recorded drills, the learner could watch an action being repeated numerous times, while the language helper describes what is happening. There are obvious practical problems with the language helper not repeating things exactly and getting bored. Perhaps video cameras will provide a solution to these problems in the near future.

There is one area of language which is amenable to drilling, however, and that is phonology. We have already noted that although the learner's first language is not responsible for the majority of grammatical errors, there is a good deal of interference at the level of phonology or accent. Not that a foreign accent is always a bar to communication, many non-native speakers are able to communicate in a new language, while retaining a definite accent. Some writers suggest that once a learner is able to communicate adequately in a language their accent will tend to fossilize. However, it seems to me that the essentially cognitive skill of mastering the grammar of a language is very different from the psycho-motor skill involved in producing, say, a front rounded vowel. While a behaviourist model may not be adequate to describe the learner's ability to master the complexity of syntax and morphology, it may still be a good description of how the learner acquires the pronunciation of a language. It does seem that drilling of some of the more unfamiliar sounds of the new language may be a good idea.

Evaluation

Some sort of evaluation of learner progress is necessary, both to assess overall progress in language learning and to highlight areas of strength and weakness in the learner's ability. Subjective evaluation of progress by the learner herself is not a satisfactory measure and some sort of device which allows an objective evaluation is necessary. LAMP includes a self rating checklist for language ability which is very easy to use. However, the LAMP scale, as it is known, reveals its speech-led roots in that it only evaluates the learner's ability to speak the language. No attempt is made to evaluate comprehension,

reading, or writing. The LAMP scale is useful in as far as it goes, but there is a need for some way of gaining a wider evaluation of the learner's ability. In her paper on program evaluation Gloria Kindell gives examples of other self-rating scales. These cover more ground than the LAMP scale but are not as easy to use. As an appendix to this paper I have included a self-rating checklist which works along the lines of the LAMP scale but attempts to assess the learner's comprehension skills.

APPENDIX

Self-Rating Checklist for Comprehension

This self-rating checklist is based on the *LAMP scale* found in *Language Acquisition Made Practical* by Brewster and Brewster. However, unlike the *LAMP scale*, this checklist concentrates on the learner's ability to understand the language.

The scale is used in the same manner as the *LAMP scale*. The learner should attempt to answer all of the questions and is regarded as having reached a given level when he can confidently check all of the questions for that level. A learner on level one who can confidently check three or more (but not all) level two questions may be considered as being at level one plus. This is the same for each level.

Level One Questions

When people speak other languages around me, I can tell those who are speaking the language I am learning.

When I hear two persons speaking, I can catch a few words here and there.

I can distinguish between a question and an order.

I can understand questions about my name, my home and what I am doing in my new situation.

When someone is introduced to me, I understand his name and where he comes from.

If someone describes how to find a building in my neighborhood, I can follow their directions.

Level Two Questions

If someone describes an event, I know on which day and at what time of day it happened.

If someone asks me about one of my neighbors, I can understand to whom they are referring.

In a casual exchange of greetings I can understand everything said to me.

When eating with friends, I can understand comments about the food if they are addressed directly to me.

If someone describes the village to me, I will understand where to find the church, the market, or other prominent features.

Level Three Questions

If I call to see someone and they are not there, I can understand what I am being told about my friend's absence.

As long as my coworker is willing to repeat once in a while, I can understand when he tells me how he spent the previous day.

I can understand several short sentences in a row during a normal conversation.

If someone describes to me about how to do a simple task, I will be able to follow their directions.

If I hear a sermon based on a passage of the Bible I am familiar with, I can follow the main idea.

I can follow a description of some facet of local culture which interests me.

Level Four Questions

When people are speaking together about local problems I can understand enough to form an opinion about the matter.

I can understand snatches of conversation which I happen to overhear.

I can understand what is being said when someone is shouting some distance away.

I understand the rules for turntaking in conversation and can recognize different types of discourse from the way the language

is used. I know when someone is speaking in an inappropriate manner.

I can understand humor and language puns.

Level Five Questions

When people speak to me in the new language, I reply without really being conscious of which language is being used in the conversation.

I am sufficiently fluent to be able to understand proverbs and stories.

I understand discussions in the language as well as those in my mother tongue.

I can follow descriptions of quantity which involve large numbers without needing to translate them into my mother tongue in my head.

Listening to the new language is no more exhausting mentally than listening to my mother tongue.

People make no effort to speak slowly or explain cultural details when they are addressing me.

Notes

1. Some authors, notably Krashen, draw a distinction between language learning, which is seen as the conscious process of learning grammatical rules and structures, and language acquisition seen as an unconscious, automatic process. No such distinction is intended in this paper and the terms are used interchangeably.

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Report on the Australian Linguistic Institute

Robert Early

SIL Vanuatu and The Australian National University

Many of us from further parts (deictic centre = North America) have been aware, enviously, of the Institutes run by the Linguistic Society of America for many years. Now we can boast our own South Pacific version, with the successful completion of the Inaugural Australian Linguistic Institute, which was held at the University of Sydney, Australia, for the two weeks from the 29th June until the 10th July.

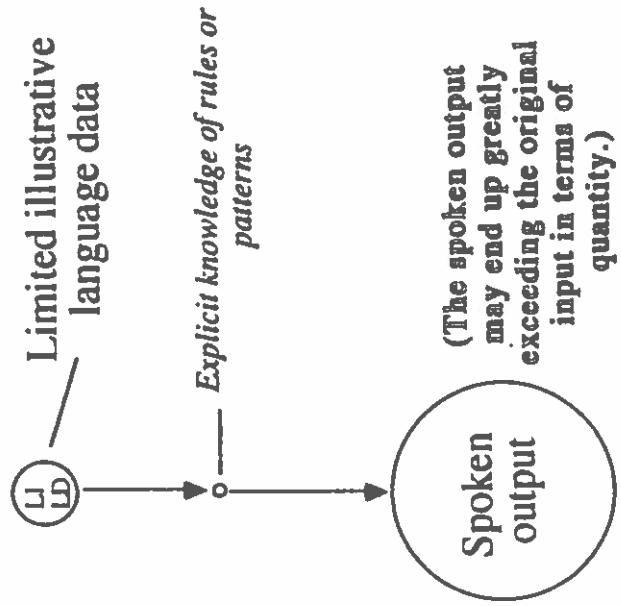
The Institute was sponsored by the Australian Linguistics Society and the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia, with the heavy burden of conceptualization, promotion and administration being carried by the staff and students of the Linguistics Department, University of Sydney, under the chairmanship of Professor Bill Foley. The 300 or so registrations greatly exceeded organizers' expectations, and while there was just a handful of international participants, there were pleasing representations of teachers of linguistics, researchers, and post-graduate students from many different institutions throughout Australia and New Zealand.

The Institute provided courses and workshops on many topics, some of which could be taken for credit from different universities. There were more people offering to teach courses than could be fitted into the time available, so the organizers were able to present a selection of good quality courses. The most well-received were those that had an important international teacher as a drawcard. These included a course on non-linear phonology by Nick (G.N.) Clements (Institute de Phonétique, Paris); one on LFG by Joan Bresnan (UCLA); and a workshop on Space in Language and Interaction in Aboriginal Australia by Stephen Levinson (Max-Planck Cognitive-Anthropology Research Group). Other course offerings included: Aboriginal English, Pidgins, and Creoles; conversation analysis; language and gender; language and race; cross-cultural pragmatics; various courses in applied linguistics topics such as language acquisition, planning

Two General Views of Language Learning

(based on Arthur 1993)

Speech-led language learning



Comprehension-led language learning

